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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN GERMANY-U.S. MEPP GERMANY-IRAQ-
BND;BERLIN

A. Lead Stories Summary
B. (Iran) Nuclear Program
C. (Germany-U.S.) Merkel Visit
D. (MEPP) Palestinian Elections
E. (Germany-Iraq) Involvement Of German Intelligence
Service

A. Lead Stories Summary

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HEADLINES

The EU Wants To Bring The Iran Conflict To The UN Security Council (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

"BND Was Supposed To Protect German Soldiers" (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

BND: We Have Never Singled Out Targets (Die Welt)

BND Agents Were On Mission In Iraq (Frankfurter Rundschau)

Did Germany Take Part In Iraq War? (Tagesspiegel)

How Much Did Steinmeier Know? (Berliner Zeitung)

Editorials focused on the alleged involvement of the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) in the Iraq war, the decision of Deutsche Bahn to keep its seat in Berlin, and the verdict in the Lokman Mohammed trial. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with stories on Germany's alleged participation in the Iraq war.

B. (Iran) Nuclear Program

1. National radio station Deutschlandfunk of Cologne (1/13) broadcast the following commentary by Peter Philipp:

"One could have expected more from such confident politicians like the foreign ministers from Germany, France and Great Britain as the things they have now agreed upon in the question of Iran's nuclear program. The Europeans, at least the EU-3, have now again demonstrated that they are politically unable to resolve international problems. But what now? For a long time, the United States has pressed for sanctions on Iran, even though it knows that such measures usually hit the wrong side and cannot help change the minds of those who are responsible. And the Europeans cannot be interested in sanctions, since they have thus far courted Iran as an economic partner. China will not approve such sanctions because it is dependent on Iranian natural gas and oil. In the end, Tehran could answer sanctions by leaving the Non-Proliferation Treaty. What has been achieved?"

2. "To The Security Council"

Gnter Nonnenmacher observed in center-right Frankfurter

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Allgemeine (1/13):

"Great Britain, France and German now seem to have lost their patience. That is why something the Iranians have tried to avoid at any cost is now coming closer, but it is obvious they are now willing to accept: the matter being referred to the UN Security Council. But if the Security Council wants to do more than just discuss the matter, it must soon talk about sanctions, which require the approval of the five permanent UN Security Council members. Tehran has now overstretched the matter to such a degree that even the governments in Beijing and Moscow no longer strictly

oppose punitive measures. In the end, even Russia and China cannot have an interest in another highly unpredictable regime joining the still exclusive circle of nuclear powers."

3. "Scornful"

Matthias Arning had this to say in an editorial in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (1/13):

"Obviously, Iran's President Ahmadinejad does not seem to care about the relations of his country with the West.. The government in Tehran hopes that the most recent activities will have a domestic effect. It wants to convey to the Iranians that its own viewpoint is strong that not even UN Security Council sanctions can cause any irritation. After the EU-3 sees the talks to have reached a 'dead end,' we can now expect further escalation of the situation.

"The EU-3, the United States, Russia and China will consult with the Europeans next week. But independently they have explicitly warned the regime in Tehran that it must expect its isolation and fear decisions by the UN Security Council. The Europeans agreed on the turning point in their policies when they said the leadership of Iran is clearly propagating 'disrespect.' Without any respect, every talk will quickly come to an end."

4. Centrist Stuttgarter Zeitung (1/120 had this to say:

"There is no way around sanctions if [the West] really wants to force the powers-that-be in Tehran to give up their policies heading for becoming a nuclear power. Over the past few years, the hardliners have shown that tempting trade offers, security guarantees or the danger of an Israeli attack on their nuclear power plants do not impress

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them. Such punitive actions, however, must be accompanied by the diplomatic offer to return to the negotiating table"

C. (Germany-U.S.) Merkel Visit

1. Michael Groth commented on national radio station Deutschlandfunk of Cologne (1/12):

"When people raise a toast to a new era of German-U.S. cooperation at the German embassy in Washington, it would be out of wishful thinking. Primarily in the United States, there are great hopes for a revival of the transatlantic friendship under a CDU/CSU/SPD coalition after the disaster in relations between President Bush and ex-chancellor Schröder.. George W. Bush is supposed to have said that the new chancellor understands better the significance of freedom, because she was raised in a totalitarian environment. But the president will certainly not have meant the prisoners from Guantanamo and Merkel's criticism of this camp. But this criticism makes clear that the times are over in which the FRG always approved all kinds of actions of the big ally. This was already true for Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl, for Gerhard Schröder in particular, and is now also true for Angela Merkel. She will address Guantanamo in her talks with the president.

"Bush will spend a lot of time with the chancellor. In view of increasing criticism in the U.S. he wants to avoid any foreign policy trouble. The chancellor will help him with this. Angela Merkel wants to introduce herself to Washington, no more and no less. But the well-phrased communique after the visit should not blur the core of the

visit. Germany and the United States have embarked upon a path from a community that shares the same values to a community that shares the same interests. If these interests do not coincide, then a dissent will remain. But a great deal of problems affect both Germans and Americans. So there are enough reasons for cooperation."

2. "The Radioactive President"

Washington correspondent Christoph von Marschall opined in an editorial in centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (1/13):

"The character of German-U.S. relations has

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fundamentally changed over the past 15 years. Angela Merkel and President Bush will celebrate close relations today during their meeting, but there is no way back to the harmony of 1989. When Merkel sits on the plane back to Washington tonight, she will be unchanged, including with respect to transatlantic differences of interests. First, Germany and Europe have become less significant to the United States because the bond that the communist threat formed is history. The tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers who were ambassadors between the two nations are also a thing of the past. Second, other regions in the world have become more important. The U.S. global power and the German middle power are concentrating their resources on new trouble spots.. Third, the much-praised community that shares the same values will no longer help. The debate of the concrete policy in the fight against terror leads to new conflicts and the controversy over Guantanamo is weakening the feeling of cohesion.

"Fourth, the greatest problem is the drifting apart of official cooperation between the governments, which is close and confidential, and public opinion. For the majority of Germans, Bush is considered radioactive and America a danger for peace. For the time being, Bush and Merkel can only be partners to limit the damage. Constructive partnership can be possible only if the president is able to accept a coordinated global policy and for the chancellor to lead. Those who have good reasons to cooperate in the fight against terror and the reconstruction of Iraq do not do this in secret but try to get the support from its citizens."

3. "Merkel's Visit Will Change Little"

Washington correspondent Markus Gnther filed the following editorial for centrist Klner Stadt-Anzeiger of Cologne (1/13):

"The notion that Angela Merkel's visit to Washington will result in the end of a dark chapter in German-American relations is as misleading as the idea that the chancellor would make a kow-tow to the U.S. president and would serve him well as of today. It is right to say that not too much will change in German-U.S. relations. They will remain more or less good, and they were even better than many assumed during the times of the conflict between Schrder and Bush. But at the same time, these relations will remain burdened by factors which both sides can hardly influence. This includes the ongoing alienation of both countries that has developed since the 60s. While a radical secularization

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took place in Germany, the United States has experienced a renaissance of religion. A new self-understanding has developed in Germany, which considers organizations like the UN and the EU organizations that point a path to the future, while international cooperation for the United States is a necessary supplement to a national state policy..

"There are good reasons why the chancellor will try to position herself differently than her predecessor in the United States. She wants to convey the message that Germany will not pursue a policy against the United States.. She clearly knows that this is the precondition for carrying out differences of opinion with the U.S. government without creating a rift in relations.. If, at the end of this visit, pragmatic cooperation surfaces, then much would be won. Pathos of friendship and an embellishing rhetoric glossing over the differences of opinion between the two governments, are of no use for anyone."

D. (MEPP) Palestinian Elections

1. "Pragmatic Islamists"

Tomas Avenarius concluded in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/13):

"Mahmud al-Zahar is one of the most radical leaders in the association of radicals called Hamas. But he is not stupid. Of course, the Islamic leader knows that he will also have to enter into talks with the Israelis if he really had a say in a future Palestinian government.. But what is even more important: the Palestinian territories survive only because of international assistance. A Palestinian government that refuses to enter into talks with Israel would face empty coffers..

"Thus far, Hamas has enjoyed the advantages of being a classical opposition party since it was able to criticize without there being a need to show one's real skills. In case Hamas wins the elections, even the hardliners among the Islamists must demonstrate new pragmatism. Their election platform has been comparably mild, and is surprising because it does not show any sharp rhetoric. But the fundamental position of Hamas in the Jerusalem question or with respect to the Israeli recognition of the borders from 1967 as a minimum basis for a Palestinian state will hardly change.

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But in this respect, the Israelis are relentless, too."

E. (Germany-Iraq) Involvement Of German Intelligence Service

1. Andreas Cichowicz commented on ARD-TV's (national channel one) late evening newscast Tagesthemen (1/12):

"The Red-Green government and Chancellor Schröder's monument is showing the first cracks. The 'no' to the Iraq war was its legacy. but now the truth is coming to the fore. The gap between words and deeds, between morals and realpolitik, is now surfacing and we are speechlessly taking note of it.. I personally do not believe in the view that the Germans were the good ones in a dirty war. To say that there was only a bit of cooperation in the war is a fiction. Everything serves to plan military missions. There is also not just a bit of torture, there is only torture. And even if the government had the best of all intentions, mistakes can happen. This is part of the logic of war. The accusation of having offered direct assistance for the search for Saddam Hussein is serious and needs to be refuted. If the previous government did not know anything about it, it was incompetent. but if it had approved this cooperation, it would have lied to the Germans. The government in Berlin is nervous, and this is right."

2. "Yes And No To The War"

Heribert Prantl judged in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/13):

"If it is true that Schröder and Steinmeier did not know about any German-U.S. cooperation in the war, then this would be an example of blatant incapacity of the political leadership and insubordination and conspiracy of the intelligence service. If they approved or even pushed for such cooperation, then we will be faced with an abyss of lies, and the image of the peacefulness of the peace chancellor will crumble."

3. "Deliberate Gray Zones"

Richard Meng argued in an editorial in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (1/13) argued:

"This is an example of a dirty business. And an example

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that again proves what kind of political credibility risk these allegedly unavoidable intelligence service agents can be. The damage to current Foreign Minister Steinmeier has now become a fact. The Red-Green government, this alliance that emphasized its moral standards again and again, allowed gray zones in its anti-terror fight, including interrogations abroad in unacceptable prisons. All this makes setting up a fact-finding committee urgent. If so much public attention leads to a restriction of the activities of the Bundesnachrichtendienst, then this need not be detrimental."

4. "BND And Iraq"

Stefan-Andreas Casdorff said in centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (1/13):

"The current foreign minister will have to offer a full explanation of the events which happened during his time as chief of staff in the Chancellery, be it in an investigative committee of the Bundestag. So many things are involved. At issue is ex-chancellor Schröder's remaining reputation. At issue is also Steinmeier's reputation as manager of power. At issue is the reputation of the state, which should not allow intelligence service agents to interfere in its business. What would be worse: the latter or the eloquent silence at a higher level? Schröder is no longer in office but Steinmeier is. He should fight for it."

5. "Friendly Fire"

Thomas Hanke noted in business daily Handelsblatt of Duesseldorf (1/13):

"Now facts must be put on the table, maybe even in a fact-finding committee. The opposition will hardly miss this chance. But we would also like to know why Washington has all of sudden leaked so much information which are compromising the former government, but which will also create trouble for the executive. First, we got information that former interior minister Schily was informed of the kidnapping of German national Khaled el-Masri, and now ARD-

TV's current affairs magazine Panorama informs that the BND had a few observers in Baghdad. This can, to use the military lingo, be 'friendly fire,' a mishap..

6. "Accomplices To The Iraq War"

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Bettina Gaus opined in an editorial in leftist die tageszeitung of Berlin (1/13):

"Peace chancellor Schrder? If BND agents really had recommended to the U.S. forces bomb targets, then this characterization should be a thing of the past. It is certainly possible to argue about overflight rights for the allies and whether this privilege was outweighed by open criticism of the Iraq war. But lines would have been "finally crossed if there was support for concrete military operations. Then Germany would have taken part in the Iraq war. The government would have lied to the public and to the Bundestag."

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